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should seek to shield it from such a calamity, but is suggested rather by their own conflicting interests, by their mutual jealousies and rivalries, by their dread of domestic revolutions which would be social and anti-Christian in their tendencies, and by the fear that the moral forces at their disposal may not be sufficiently cohesive to cope with those wielded by their Moslem adversaries, who will find in a religious war their strongest bond of union, and in the summons to a Djehad their surest guaranty against internal revolt.

LAURENCE OLIPHANT.

ART. IV. — WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD.*

THE common belief that no man can be wholly trusted when he writes the story of his own life is well founded. Like most of the opinions which men hold of mankind, it comes less from experience of others than from knowledge of ourselves. We feel, each and all of us, that we ourselves could not be trusted to give the world, or even our best friends, a simple, full, unbiassed revelation of our lives, inner and outer. We know, most of us, that in the telling of any incident of daily life of which we have been a part, the temptation, more or less strong or weak, arises to show ourselves at the best consistent with truth, to keep back anything that might make against us, and to give a little glow of color to what would else be a too cold and simple story. Few men are able to withstand this temptation wholly; still fewer do not know it at all. But there are men who do not know it; men to whom self is out of mind, and before whose eyes truth always stands, their only guide, almost their only God. Such men, however, very rarely write their own biographies. For such men have rarely, we might say never, anything to say about themselves that the world would care to hear, or even that their own vanity might suggest that the world would wish to know,—a fact very significant and not wholly admirable, but rather derogatory to

* *Autobiography of William H. Seward from 1801 to 1834. With a Memoir of his Life and Selections from his Letters from 1831 to 1846.* By FREDERICK W. SEWARD. New York: D. Appleton and Company. 8vo. pp. 822.

those of whom the world does like to hear, and to the world itself; a fact encouraging to egoists, to all those men who like to have the world take them at their own valuation. Of this class are almost all writers, — whether of prose or poetry, whether in words or in music, — painters, sculptors; and of this class are statesmen even. For it is the business of all these men, a work to which they are born, to impress *themselves* upon the world. The poet shows us human nature, not pure and simple, but as he sees it; the painter puts upon his canvas physical nature as it is thrown upon his brain. All creators put something of themselves into their work. “I can’t see that in the landscape,” said the lady who overlooked Turner’s drawing. “Don’t you wish that you could, madam?” was the painter’s reply. Of intellectual workers only the men of science are entirely free from this not ignoble egoism. They are only seekers, and do not expect themselves to be sought. They search only for fact and law, and stand before Nature in the attitude of learners, mute except for asking what and why. The less there is of anything outside of Nature, the less there is of themselves, in the results of their labors, the better for the discovery of that truth, universal to the world and to all time, of which they are in search. Science seeks not to make, or really to do, but only to see, to know; it is merely a knowing. Exactness is its object, reason its method. Among all intellectual workers only scientific men have this receptiveness, this self-negation. The very poet is not more self-asserting than the statesman. For not only is statesmanship not the science which some people seem to think it, but it is not even the art of ruling according to established law, either written law or the law of right. It is the art of using existing facts and controlling existing forces to effect the purpose of the ruler. According to the character of that purpose is the statesman noble or base; according to his methods is he great or petty. But noble or base, great or petty, he puts himself into his work; his work is himself made manifest in act and force.

In the autobiography of a statesman, therefore, we cannot reasonably look for the absence of self-justification; the most that we can ask is honesty, a frank revelation of himself, his purposes, and the reason of his action. We may hope to find something but not all of that which while he was a power in the state he was obliged

to conceal. For conceal he must, or at least withhold, or he would not rule for a day. Nor is he peculiar in this. All men conceal their thoughts, even the best, the purest, the most benevolent, the most trustworthy, the most candid. They do not tell all their thoughts, even to their most trusted friends, or of them. Jonathan and David will trust each other with their lives, their fortunes, and their honor, but not with all their thoughts. A man and his wife whose love is perfect, whose mutual confidence is unimpaired, whose purposes are one, keep from each other a part of their thoughts. It is inevitable that it should be so. It is a sad truth, but one which will not be disputed by any observant man who has even a moderate knowledge of the world, that if even friends and fellow-workers could see each other's souls and know each other's thoughts, not only while they are apart, but when they are together in an intercourse of perfect confidence and mutual respect, friendship would become impossible, and society would fall to pieces, — into as many pieces as there are individuals of which it is composed. Reserve is the very foundation of confidence and mutual respect. The difference between honesty and dishonesty, good faith and bad, in the intercourse of life, is not that the former tells all and truly, and the latter only part or untruly; but that the former tells all and gives all that it professes to give, and that the latter professes to tell and to give what it keeps back, sinning with the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

It is much to be regretted that Mr. Seward's eminently noble and useful life was ended before he had finished the Autobiography which, at the request of his family, he had begun. For, from what he had written of it before his death, and from the revelations of his letters written to his family and his nearest personal friends, we may infer with certainty that he would have dealt frankly with the world, and would have told us all that the most candid man could be expected to tell of his purposes, his methods, his feelings, and even of his thoughts. He would have had his reserves of course. No man is so without intellectual and moral shame that he goes forth with mind and soul unclothed. Some "troublesome disguise" he must put on except when he is quite alone. But we may be sure that if Mr. Seward had completed his record of his life, we should have known him thoroughly. Perhaps we do so now, so far as his nature and his motives are concerned. For this auto-

biography and these letters reveal him to us as a man not only of remarkable singleness of purpose, but of a rare candor and simplicity of soul. He did wear his heart upon his sleeve when daws were not by to peck it. To those whom he loved and trusted and who loved and trusted him he was singularly open-hearted. Such is not the general opinion in regard to him, but such will almost surely be the verdict of those who read the imperfect record of his life which is now laid before the world. And, moreover, it is manifest that no small part of his influence over men and upon public affairs was due, on the one hand, to his candor in regard to himself, and on the other, to his charity toward others. For more than thirty years of his life Mr. Seward was a power in the land, active, formative, impelling. To no other one man of his generation is due so much of the present greatness and prosperity of the United States. That greatness and that prosperity have been achieved in the direct lines which he marked out and in large measure by the very means which he indicated. He was at one time, in the earliest years of his public life, almost in a minority of one. His career was an unceasing struggle. He did battle daily. He had hosts of bitter political enemies; he was subjected to constant misapprehension and misconstruction, and he suffered all his life from personal misrepresentation and abuse. But his experience of the latter was invariably from the hands of strangers. Of those who were brought into personal contact with him, even as opponents, he made not personal enemies, but often personal friends. This was the result of his perfect candor, his good faith, and the kindliness of his nature. And yet it was his fate to be regarded during a great part of his life as a scheming demagogue, a man of bitter soul, unsparing enmity, and unscrupulous ambition; how unjustly we shall see by glancing over the traces of his career.

Early in his Autobiography Mr. Seward records that he had often reflected that, whatever care and diligence we exercise, our fortunes in life are beyond our control. Of the truth of this reflection no reasonable man of any experience of the world will entertain a moment's doubt. Whatever a man's ability or inclinations may be, circumstances, of which opportunity and necessity are the most important, determine his career. Mr. Seward's reflection was, indeed, brought to his mind by the remembrance that his course of life was not that which he had marked out for himself.

He tells us that until late in life judicial preferment was the aim of his ambition. He meant to be a lawyer, and he wished to be a judge. His early bias in this direction was caused by his observation of the deference paid to his father as a justice of the peace. This, however, was a mere boyish fancy, the impulse of which would not long have acted even upon the youthful aspirations of such a man as he, had it not accorded with the great motive force of his nature. This was a love of justice ; not of that kind of justice which warrants the apophthegm *summum jus summa injuria*, but that which consists in doing essential right to all men. It was for this that he longed for judicial power and place, — that he might defend the right, protect the weak, and give restoration to the injured. But although his mind was in a certain sense judicial, — judicial in its freedom from prejudice and from personal bias, even the bias of sympathy, which, however strongly felt, seems never to have blinded him to the perception, not only of essential right and wrong, but of what on the widest view of every case seemed to be the best and most prudent course to be taken, — he was not juridical. He had too little deference for precedent to have become a good presiding officer in a court of record, at least without doing violence to his nature. He would have fretted under the legal restraints of the bench. His place in the attainment of justice was that of an advocate, the earnest and implacable, yet charitable foe of wrong ; for his charity was as great as his love of justice. He could not sit quietly and see wrong done, even under the forms of law, if it were done to others ; but he could forgive the wrong-doer, and even seek and suggest the excuses that would palliate his wrong-doing. He was not a good hater. Such being his nature, and circumstances having very early in life drawn, almost forced, him into the field of politics, he became a statesman of large and liberal views, a leader in the great progressive movement of his age and country toward the elevation of the whole people, without distinction of condition, nativity, race, or prescriptive right of whatever kind, to all the benefits conferred by absolute freedom of personal action within the law, by absolute equality before the law, and by such education as should fit each man to hold and use these rights and advantages with benefit to himself and to the whole community.

It is a remarkable fact in regard to our political men (unhappily

we cannot say our politicians without conveying with the word some of the taint with which it is penetrated) that so many of the more distinguished among them have been not only lawyers, but lawyers of rural birth and education. For whatever reason, our large cities have produced very few of the men who have exercised any great influence upon our public affairs. Almost all of these have come, if not from the agricultural districts, from the small towns which are the intellectual centres of such districts. Mr. Seward was not an exception to this general rule. He was born in a little village of not more than a dozen dwellings, almost in the centre of the State of New York, and he was first heard of as a young lawyer in Auburn; and in Auburn, when his public duties did not call him to Albany or to Washington, or when he was not travelling to satisfy that insatiable craving to study the world, physical as well as human, which never ceased but with his life, he lived as a practising lawyer until he became too important a personage to appear as attorney and counsel unless for a nation or an oppressed people. As a school-boy he began to think, — a rarer mental process even in the mature than is generally supposed, — and to develop that love of freedom and of liberty restrained only by right and law which became the informing sentiment of his whole life. He records how the performance of Addison's "Cato" at a school exhibition, when he was too young to take part in the puerile representation, made him "a hater of military and imperial usurpation for life." He completed his academic studies at Union College under Dr. Nott, whose liberal "broad-church" management of that institution made it such a refuge of young fellows driven out from other colleges by their stricter discipline, that it received and long retained the name in college circles of "Botany Bay." The attempt of Dr. Nott to control undergraduates only through the influence of their own self-respect had, we may be sure, the young Seward's warmest sympathy. It must have commended itself wholly and warmly to a nature like his, and he records his memory of the manliness of spirit developed under the system of Dr. Nott. But he does not speak so highly of the system of instruction, which consisted chiefly in a cultivation of the memory under which much was forgotten as soon as learned. He justly says that this system was not peculiar to Union, and then makes another remark significant of his view

of the policy in all respects the wisest for America. "The error," he says, appears to be "incidental to our system of education, which sacrifices a full and complete training of the individual to the important object of affording the utmost possible education to the largest number of citizens." Whether the education possible under this system is the best that could be given even with such an end in view may be questioned; but that that end commended itself to his judgment in his later as well as in his earlier years there can be no doubt whatever. These were the ruling motives of his life, the fundamental principles of his political action,—war upon oppression in whatever form, and the diffusion of knowledge among the whole people; all else was incidental to these or developed from them.

This view of education is very "American"; and the sum of Mr. Seward's opinions and feelings and mental traits made him a notably "American" man. Capable of a very broad view of politics, as well as of men and things, he habitually saw them with the eye of a man who had the welfare of his country close at heart, and to whom the good, the happiness, the hopes and wishes, and even the peculiarities, of the people around him were of the first importance. He was serenely indifferent to foreign criticism. It did not trouble him as it did others less self-contained and more sensitive; although he studied it to learn from it, much however, it may be suspected, as if he had the leaden-eyed *fas est ab hoste doceri* in mind. And indeed foreign criticisms, particularly in politics and diplomacy, are rarely friendly. It was no mere sense of duty or of becomingness that placed Mr. Seward thus always on the "American" side of every question, and tinged all his opinions with "Americanism." He had a genuine and lively sympathy with his countrymen of the "average" class; and early in life he formed the opinion that in the long run they might be safely trusted with all political power. He also was not long in discovering that the prosperity of the United States and their progress to the power and station which they have since attained were possible by the wise use of their peculiar advantages, physical, political, and social, and a development of their peculiar traits, to the comparative disregard of that which they had in common with the people of older political organizations in more thickly settled countries and on soil longer reclaimed. Hence his "American-

ism" was not "native Americanism." The party which was founded upon that one idea was a genuine outgrowth of true patriotic feeling. It was an honest protest, put into action against the demagogism that used the ignorant emigrant, and was in turn used by him, for selfish purposes, the end of the bargain being political corruption and a low tone of social morals. It sought to make Tweeds and Fernando Woods impossible. Had it obtained control of the government long enough to have effected its purpose, it would have accomplished a certain good; and perhaps Tweed might have been impossible. But its patriotism was narrow. It would probably have impaired the material prosperity of the country, and checked the development of its resources; and it certainly would have introduced distinction of class, and have given us a body of citizens and laboring men of foreign birth who would have found themselves disfranchised, without a voice in a government professing to rest upon the principle of equal political and civil rights in all men. Those who believe that full citizenship and a voice in the government should be a privilege, and not the matter-of-course possession of every human being of legal age who is not in a prison or a madhouse, may still mourn the failure of "native Americanism"; but Mr. Seward was not of their number. His "Americanism" welcomed the immigrant, and sought to "Americanize" him as soon as possible, and as thoroughly as possible. His attitude upon this question subjected him to the charge of demagogism on the part of many honest people, some of whom, at least, changed their opinion both of his policy and his good faith in the light of the events of subsequent years. He was thought to be bidding for the votes of citizens of foreign birth. Those who imputed this motive to him ought at least to have remembered what we may be sure he knew well and never forgot, that the bulk of our immigrant citizens was always to be found acting with the political party to which he during his whole life was in opposition. His policy upon this question was indicated clearly, unmistakably, in his first message as governor of New York in 1839, long before the "Know-Nothing" party was thought of, and in the treatment of a subject entirely aloof from the political notion upon which that party was founded. Discussing the subject of railways and canals to connect the great seaport of the country with the West through the great State of which, at the age

of thirty-eight years, he found himself the first magistrate, he put forth views which his son and biographer has thus summarized:—

“America is a land of latent, unappropriated wealth ; the minerals under its soils are not more truly wealth hidden and unused than are its vast capabilities and resources, material, political, social, and moral. Two streams that come from the Old World, in obedience to great natural laws, are pouring into it daily fresh, invigorating energies. One of these streams is the surplus capital of Europe. The other is the surplus labor of the world. Both steadily increase in volume and velocity. It is idle to try to roll back their tide. It is wise to accept them and to use them. Instead of delaying about one great line of communication from the sea to the lakes, rather open three, — through the centre of the State, through its northern counties, and through its southern ones. Instead of vainly seeking to exclude the immigrant, rather welcome him to our ports, speed him on his Western way, share with him our political and religious freedom, tolerate his churches, establish schools for his children, and so assimilate his principles, his habits, manners, and opinions, to our own. In a word, open as far as possible to all men of whatever race all paths for the improvement of their condition, as well as for their mental and moral culture.”

This was all ; but it was enough. He lived long enough to see the logic of events rapidly prove and illustrate the wisdom of his policy, and to know that no considerable number of his fellow-citizens, however purely “American” in birth and feeling, would think of adopting the “Know-Nothing” theory of exclusion sooner than they would have returned to the early New England practice of making church-membership a condition of full citizenship. In this same message he also recognized the soundness and the wisdom of the views in regard to the vast importance to New York of all means of transportation through the State, and particularly of the Erie Canal, which were set forth with a far-reaching vision and a splendid confidence that provoked derision from shorter-sighted men by Samuel B. Ruggles, since recognized as our most eminent practical political economist and statistician ; and he and Mr. Ruggles both lived to see the views and plans which the one projected and the other approved much more than sustained by the conversion of glittering probabilities into facts of solid gold ; and to see this they did not have to live very long.

Mr. Seward’s sagacity, — and he was notably sagacious, — and

his habit of looking at all questions of state from a practical point of view, led him, no less than his hatred of oppression and his love of his fellow-men, however humble, to take a view of slavery which was in entire accordance with his views upon that of immigration. He not only detested slavery as a cruel wrong to the negro, but he saw in it a permanent element of political weakness, an active cause of social demoralization, and the means of a fictitious prosperity which was sure to end in poverty and ruin. The negroes were here, and here they must remain. Would we or would we not, they were a part of our social fabric; for they were men. Deprived of the rights of men, under a government professing to be founded upon the inalienable rights of man, they were an element constantly working toward destruction. His dogma of the "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery which brought down upon him such fierce denunciation, in the free States hardly less than in the slave, was in fact only the foundation of a fundamental moral truth exemplified and illustrated in all history, a truth which has its foundations in man's reason and man's nature. He saw it, and with that boldness which, no less than his candor, was a part of his own nature, he uttered it in a happy phrase that became a watchword and a battle-cry in one of the grandest and most terrible conflicts of opinion and material force that the world has ever beheld.

Mr. Seward's position in regard to slavery was a peculiar one. Politic although he was, a statesman, and not unskilled in statecraft, he was yet a man of sentiment; and of all his sentiments none, not even love of family and friends, was stronger than his hatred of slavery. He really hated it; hated it with an enduring, remorseless, unrelenting hatred. He was determined to give it no peace, but to hunt it down as if it were a wild and bloody beast. His whole life reveals this. His hatred began when he was a school-boy. And yet he never was an Abolitionist, never took his position openly among those who made antislavery agitation the chief purpose of their public lives. But in this there was neither inconsistency nor cowardice. His sagacity and his practical view of all affairs showed him that he could champion freedom better with his strength buckled within the belt of law than with it loose relaxed in the free fighting of agitation. As his biographer picturesquely represents his position, he did not take his place among

the pioneers who straggle forward hacking and hewing at whatever comes in their way, winning no battles although they open the way for battles to be won. But he was one of the chief leaders of the disciplined army that first stood fast like a great reserve, and finally swept on to grand and forever irreversible victory. Of the service that he rendered the cause of freedom by his forbearance, his unresenting endurance of misrepresentation, vilification and wrong, his refusal to be tempted without the bounds of law, there can hardly be too high an estimate. To him, chiefly, was it due that the final break between the slave power and the free, and the immediately succeeding civil war, were postponed until the free States had reached the needful degree of moral tension to make them willing or at least ready to stand up boldly in the conflict. As it was, the rupture came almost too soon, and had not the essential question been mixed with one of patriotism and national existence, there would have been a repetition of compromise. The free States were like Capulet's serving-man Sampson, and would not bite their thumbs at the slave States unless they had the law on their side. And at last the time came when they had it. The slave States were in the wrong, or seemed to the free States to be so, and at least they were in the wrong of an attempted destruction of the government of which only a few months before they had endeavored to get the control at the ballot-box, and gallantly although they fought, the government sustained by the free North was too strong for them. Now they were forced into this wrongful initiative chiefly by the forbearance of Mr. Seward. Had he chosen to do so, he might have brought on the rupture long before, or at least have hastened it; but he saw that the time had not yet come, and he saw, moreover, the inestimable importance of placing the slave States in the position of aggressors, and therefore, while he remained the determined foe of slavery itself and of the political system and party by which it was protected, he still observed a certain restraint, he advised forbearance and a keeping within the law, and he remained as far as possible upon terms of friendly personal intercourse with the representatives of the slaveholding States. Nor was there in his course upon this question the least duplicity.

Although he may have been silent as to his opinions in regard to future events, and as to the modes of action he should advise, he

never concealed his feeling toward slavery or his purpose to withstand its extension at all hazards. He never curried favor with the slaveholders at Washington, or bid for slaveholding favor or slaveholding votes in any way. On the contrary, notwithstanding his respect for the law, and his determination to keep within the bounds of the Constitution, he added to his dogma of the "irrepressible conflict" that of the "higher law," — a higher law, that is, than the Constitution of the United States. Truly, if a trumpet were ever blown with a not uncertain sound, it was that with which he from time to time roused up and heartened the ever-increasing band which was slowly but surely moving upon the last stronghold of slavery. Neither friend nor foe could mistake his meaning. There might have been reasonable objection, if not to the doctrine of a "higher law," at least that the proclamation of such a law did not become the lips of a Senator of the United States, whose very senatorial office and functions were the creation of the Constitution; it might have been said that before proclaiming such a law he should have laid aside his senatorship, because, however it might be with a private man, for a Senator of the United States there could be no higher law than the Constitution of the United States; but, however just this criticism, there could have been no misunderstanding by the slaveholders of the fellness of his purpose. And there was none. They recognized in him their most dreadful enemy. But with their enmity — we can hardly say their hatred — there was mingled, if not a feeling of awe, a very profound respect. At the ordinary agitators, however skilful and inflammatory, they could rave and storm, and threaten them with pistol and bowie-knife, and, when they caught them, coat them with tar and feathers; but this quiet, clear-headed, law-abiding man, respecting himself, always respecting others, never giving personal offence to others and himself refusing to be offended, — what could be done with him? Nothing. With all his self-respect and his consciousness of his own power, he had no offensive egotism; he gave no provocation to personal enmity by personal bitterness; and the fate that fell upon Charles Sumner he escaped. Even to the end he remained upon terms of personal intercourse with the leading representatives of slavery at Washington. For not only did he refrain himself from giving them ground of personal offence, but he showed them unmistakably that he would not

be provoked into personal retort by personality, but he would keep himself to the question in the abstract. It is told of him — but not in the book before us, which brings his life down only to the year 1846 — that one day a Southern Senator, irritated beyond endurance at Seward's calm but relentless manner of treating a question connected with slavery, rose and poured out upon him a sudden volley of bitter personal vituperation. When the Southerner had taken his seat, Seward rose, but did not reply; he walked quietly and firmly toward his assailant. The Senate was mute with expectation, almost with apprehension. Was Seward at last driven from his self-possession? Was there to be a personal scene, a personal insult, perhaps a personal conflict, in the Chamber? When Seward reached his still excited opponent, who looked at him in wonder and uncertainty, he extended his hand toward the other's desk, upon which lay a small box, and blandly said, "Senator, will you give me a pinch of snuff?" And so he snuffed the man and his bitter speech out into utter darkness. What could be done with a man who feared no one, hated no one, who broke no laws, even those of social courtesy, and who, with a calm consciousness of personal dignity, would not be offended, and who yet was steadily although slowly making arrangements for your utter political extinguishment, the removal of your social candlestick out of its place forever! Truly a most perplexing and impracticable person. The enemies of such men have only the alternative of overcoming them by argument or some more peaceful contrivance, or killing them. Now in Mr. Seward's case the slaveholders could not do the first, and the last would not on the whole have been a very serviceable way of getting rid of him, such are the prejudices of modern society.

The irrepressible conflict went on; the higher law asserted itself; the great crisis was at last no longer to be put off by whatever skill or whatever endurance. And when it came, he to whom all eyes had been turned for years as the man who in such a contingency was to be at the head of affairs was put aside in favor of one almost unknown, and one altogether untrained for the duties of such a place in such an emergency. It is not too much to say that the whole civilized world was surprised and dissatisfied when the Republican Convention of 1860 did not nominate Mr. Seward to the Presidency. And this failure to meet the expectations of

the world, foes as well as friends, was due entirely to one of those manifestations of personal pique, which have so often had an influence upon the fate of nations. It was by the hands of a former friend and for many years a fast ally, that Mr. Seward saw the crown of his life petulantly snatched from him and given to — no matter whom, if not to him — but to one who had done nothing to merit it, and who was so unknown to the majority of his countrymen that his identity had to be explained to them. When Horace Greeley announced to his former political partners that “the firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley was dissolved,” Mr. Weed doubtless saw that he meant mischief; Mr. Seward probably did not give that view of the matter much thought. And evidently he, with all his sagacity, had been as much surprised as any one when he found that Horace Greeley, by profession philanthropist and journalist, hungered after office. With much undisciplined mental force, with a power of direct utterance on paper which compelled attention, with many vague, inchoate, shifting views as to social and political science, and a genuine hatred of slavery, Horace Greeley was probably the most unfit man for official life that could be found in his party; and yet he wanted to be a Senator, longed to be a Cabinet Minister, and pined to be President. Probably no two men knew his unfitness for any executive or legislative position so well as Mr. Seward and Mr. Weed, except one other, Charles A. Dana, who had been managing editor of the “Tribune” during the years while it was becoming a power in the land; and his political partners did not encourage him in his aspirations. But at last he would be put off no longer, and he broke with them in a huff. To the workings of his personal spleen was due the defection from Mr. Seward at Chicago which made his nomination impossible.

Here he was at the end of his career, and that which the world looked upon as his, according to all the laws of fitness and desert, was given to another, and to one of whom the world knew nothing. That the disappointment was great for him as well as for others cannot be doubted; it must have carried with it a sense of wrong. But it bred no bitterness in Seward’s soul. Erelong it was known that he had accepted the post of Secretary of State under his obscure and uncultured rival, whose success was the most open political affront that could have been offered to him. For the first time he accepted an office by executive appointment. Only

once before, early in his career, — in fact, early in his life, so long before as 1828, — he had sought the appointment of Surrogate ; and although he did not receive it, he found, in the seeking of it, that office-holding or office-seeking would not comport with his manner of political thought and action. “ I saw at once,” he says, “ how much the desire or the holding of such a place tended to compromise my personal independence, and I resolved, thenceforth, upon no considerations other than the safety of the State ever to seek or accept a trust conferred by executive authority. That case occurred later, when I, with extreme reluctance, and from convictions of public duty, took the office of Secretary of State at the beginning of the civil war, and filled it until the restoration of peace.” Of the value of his counsels, his sagacity, and his long experience, to the raw and entirely untrained and inexperienced man who found himself in the chair in which he had himself expected to see Mr. Seward, the estimate can hardly be too high, nor of their value to the nation. There were other men who would have made at least as efficient and admirable a President as Mr. Lincoln was ; but it is safe to say that there was not another man who could have filled the office of Secretary of State as Mr. Seward did. Our foreign relations became perplexing and full of danger to a degree before unimaginable ; and with them was complicated the management of public opinion at home. For this task Mr. Seward had just the union of political sagacity and political experience, of directness in purpose and state-craft in method, of tact, of imperturbability, of untiring good-nature, that was required. His despatches did not quite please the diplomatists or the political censors of European nations, and particularly those of Great Britain. And one reason of this was that they were written, and necessarily written, with one eye at home and the other abroad. They effected their purpose. They maintained the dignity of the country even in its darkest, most distracted hour ; and, supported and enforced by the tact and skill of Mr. Adams, they carried us safely through our perils from those who loved us not abroad and put the government in no peril at home. The British political censors never tired of accusing Mr. Seward of a sort of bad faith in the Trent affair. According to them he should have hastened to give up the Confederate Commissioners before they had been asked for. But Mr. Seward knew that, in the state of

feeling among his countrymen against the British government and governing classes, to do that would have put Mr. Lincoln's government in immediate peril. He knew from the beginning, we may be sure, that the Commissioners would be given up; but he postponed their surrender until the last moment, that excitement might have time to subside, and that cool reason might be heard; and when he gave them up, although he addressed the British Minister, he used all the ingenuity in his power to work out a series of reasons that would satisfy, not the British government, but his own countrymen, of the necessity and rightfulness of compliance with the demands of a government which was then hated at the North even more than that of Jefferson Davis. The whole record of Mr. Seward's life shows him to have been eminently a magnanimous and faithful man, and never were his magnanimity or his faithfulness to the right and to his country put to severer test than when he was called upon to accept the position of Secretary of State under Mr. Lincoln.

This imperfect appreciation of his life must be closed without a consideration of its private side, where he appears always admirable, even charming, always lovable and loving. His wife and his children were constantly in his thoughts as in his heart, and his friendship was firm, warm, and lasting. There was in him a very high and delicate sense of honor, and he always held himself far above any position or office which he filled. That he sometimes used politic means for politic ends in no way justly taints his fame with duplicity or with any other craft than state-craft. He was the leader of an army in a great contest; and such leaders must use, and always have used, even spies and deserters and traitors. No man ever said truly that Mr. Seward had deceived him to his wrong. On the contrary, his effort was constantly toward openness and candor and kindness in political affairs. His view of affairs was always a high-minded one, as well as broad and generous. His natural tendency and his long experience of public life made him a true statesman, and he was one whose greatness becomes more impressive as time bears us away from him, and we look upon his life not in detail but in its full proportions.

RICHARD GRANT WHITE.